

BISHOP ADAM BOTHWELL AND THE REFORMATION IN ORKNEY

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THE Scottish Reformation, in the sense of a change officially made, came late in the day. In the long interval between the beginnings of the reformation on the continent and in England and the Scottish revolution of 1560, reforming opinions had had ample time to penetrate to Scotland, and there had also been ample opportunity to strengthen the existing ecclesiastical structure against assault. The diocese of Orkney had its share in the policy of reform from within, because Bishop Robert Reid (1541-58) was one of the outstanding churchmen of the century. In a new constitution which he drew up for his cathedral, providing for the endowment of seven dignitaries and seven canons, thirteen chaplains and six choristers, it was ordained that the chancellor should lecture publicly, once a week, on canon law and that one of the chaplains should act as master of the grammar school. This shows the bishop's interest in education, which was to be further demonstrated when on his death he left a legacy designed for educational purposes and ultimately applied to the endowment of the University of Edinburgh. But the bishop's limitations, as well as his capacity, are plain enough: his new chapter was to be financed only by stripping the parishes of revenues which would have been better applied to the maintenance of parish priests able to instruct the people in the faith; and lecturing in Kirkwall on canon law was no way to cope with imminent revolution. We know little of the development of reforming opinions in Orkney during Reid's episcopate, but it can be safely assumed that the Orcadians and Shetlanders had learned something from the example of their Scandinavian kinsfolk, among whom the reformation had been established since the 1530's, and there is one piece of evidence in the case of James Ka, a chaplain in Orkney, who was in trouble in 1550 for his "tenacity and pertinacity" in holding opinions considered to be heretical.¹

The career of Bishop Bothwell, who succeeded Reid on the very eve of the Scottish crisis of 1560, can be most easily understood if an account is first given of his pedigree and family connections.² His father, Francis,

¹ *Registrum Secreti Sigilli*, iv, 916. He is probably to be identified with "James Skea, born in Orkney," who in 1548 had been obliged to flee to England "for fear of burning for the Word of God" (*Cal. S. P. Scot.*, i, 102).

² See in general *Scots Peerage*, under "Bothwell, Lord Holyroodhouse," and Mark Napier, *Memoirs of John Napier of Merchiston*, 48 et seq.

was provost of Edinburgh and a judge of the Court of Session ; his uncle, Richard, was canon of Ashkirk in Glasgow cathedral and likewise a judge of the Court of Session ; and his brother, William, succeeded Richard in the prebend of Ashkirk. If Adam's connections on the male side were thus middle-class and professional, his relationships through females were with the landed gentry and with men of affairs. His sister Janet married Archibald Napier of Merchiston and made the bishop the uncle of one of the most famous Scots of all time, John Napier of Merchiston, inventor of logarithms. Archibald Napier, the bishop's brother-in-law, had distinguished cousins as well as a distinguished son, for his aunt had married Sir John Melville of Raith and their family included three sons—John of Raith, Robert of Murdocairny and James of Halhill—all of whom played a conspicuous part in politics, and a daughter who was the mother of the famous soldier Sir William Kirkcaldy of Grange. Adam's mother, Katherine Bellenden, was aunt of Sir John Bellenden of Auchnoule, Justice-Clerk of Scotland, and, after Francis Bothwell's death, she had married Oliver Sinclair of Pitcairns, the royal favourite whom James V had appointed as tacksman and sheriff of Orkney. Oliver Sinclair was not a promising step-father for a reforming bishop, because John Knox described him as "an enemy to God,"¹ but he is the only figure in the whole pedigree who represents a link with the north, and one can only speculate whether this connection had something to do with Adam Bothwell's appointment to the bishopric of Orkney.

The future bishop must have been born in or about 1530.² About his school and university education we have no authentic information, but of his acquisition of the degree of M.A. there can be no doubt, and there is ample evidence of his learning in Hebrew, theology and law.³ We are fortunate to have a catalogue of the library which he possessed at the time of his death—a library valued at £2000—and a list of books which he presented to King James VI, besides information about other volumes which belonged to him.⁴ The fact that he was described as a "sorcerer and execrable magician"⁵ may reflect the distrust of contemporaries for men who were skilled in physical science, and may thus have been appropriately applied to an uncle of John Napier, but a reputation for dabbling

¹ Dickinson's *Knox*, i, 28.

² See *Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments Inventory for Edinburgh*, 137 and note.

³ J. B. Craven, *History of the Church in Orkney*, 1558-1662, 2-4, 33.

⁴ *Warrender Papers* (Scot. Hist. Soc.), ii, 396-413 ; *Edinburgh Testaments*, 24th December, 1608 ; *Scot. Hist. Soc. Misc.*, i ; *Scottish Antiquary*, vii, 132 ; *Scottish Notes and Queries*, 3rd ser., vi, 198.

⁵ Mark Napier, *John Napier of Merchiston*, 234-5.

in the black art is in any event one which Adam Bothwell shares with John Knox.¹

Adam's first appointment in the church was the parsonage of Ashkirk, which his uncle and his brother had held before him.² In 1555 we find him linked for the first time with his future diocese, when he went on a journey to Orkney, at the government's expense, in company with William Mudie, who was for a number of years chamberlain of the crown property in the islands.³ Bishop Robert Reid died on 14th September, 1558, and on 22nd March following the temporality of the bishopric of Orkney, which fell to the crown during the vacancy, was granted to Sir John Bellenden, Adam Bothwell's cousin.⁴ Events were now plainly moving towards Adam's promotion, and on 2nd August, 1559, the pope provided him to the see of Orkney;⁵ the bulls of appointment were evidently secured at Rome and brought to Scotland by Gilbert Balfour, husband of Adam's sister Margaret.⁶ It is to be observed that both Bellenden and Balfour thus had an interest in Adam's appointment, and no doubt they both looked for financial reward. Bothwell was very likely consecrated as bishop before 14th October, 1559, when he was admitted to the temporality which had been in Bellenden's hands.⁷ Although, as is very often the case, the date of consecration cannot be precisely determined, no doubt about the fact of his consecration can be admitted.⁸

The diocese of which Bothwell thus became bishop was by Scottish standards neither a particularly small one nor a poor one. At that time Orkney and Shetland contained about 36 parishes, so that the diocese was larger in this respect than six of the Scottish dioceses. As for the wealth of the diocese of Orkney, it can safely be said that the income of individual livings there lay in the same range as those of other dioceses and that they were, if anything, above rather than below the average. But

¹ Dickinson's *Knox*, ii, 14, 15-6.

² Reg. of Deeds, ii, 16, 17, 25, 26, 75, 135, 253.

³ *Treasurer's Accounts*, x, 272, 284; *Protocol book of Gilbert Grote* (Scot. Rec. Soc.), Nos. 182, 184; *Registrum Secreti Sigilli*, v, 931.

⁴ *Registrum Secreti Sigilli*, v, 589.

⁵ Dowden, *Bishops of Scotland*, 267.

⁶ *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, iv, 1668.

⁷ *Reg. Sec. Sig.*, v, 708.

⁸ Several of the bishop's charters give the *anno consecrationis*, as noted in later footnotes to this article. They are not sufficiently consistent to assist in determining the date of his consecration (and Craven's argument [*op. cit.*, 4] is not tenable), but in the circumstances of his appointment consecration before admission to temporality would have been normal. It is to be observed that Bothwell is never styled "elect," as an unconsecrated bishop normally was.

the wealth of the church was badly distributed : Orkney, like the rest of Scotland, suffered through the diversion of revenues from the parishes and their use to endow diocesan and cathedral dignitaries. At some early stage, of which we have no record, a large proportion of the parsonage revenues of the majority of the Orkney parishes and of all but one of the Shetland parishes had been appropriated to the bishop's income. A further raid was made on the parochial revenues when Bishop Reid established his new constitution for the cathedral in 1544.¹ It was typical of a well-meaning prelate of the unreformed church that his interest in the higher parts of the ecclesiastical structure should be carried out at the expense of the parishes. The cathedral and diocesan dignitaries were now endowed by the appropriation to them of those parsonages in Orkney which had hitherto remained intact,² and also of the majority of the vicarages in Orkney. After the bishop and the dignitaries had had their share, the provision that remained for the parish clergy was hopelessly inadequate, in many instances only from £12 to £15 a year, at a time when a reasonable competence was somewhere in the region of £80 to £100 (Scots). (It should be added that in Shetland, where there had not been any appropriation of vicarages, the situation was very much better, with vicars' incomes ranging up to £120 a year.)³

The bishop's own revenues included only £250 in money, but quantities of corn, marts (salted carcasses of cattle), poultry, swine, butter, oil, flesh, peats, scrafish (cured saithe) and wax, valued at about £1100, giving him a total income worth about £1350 in the Scots money of the period,⁴ equivalent in purchasing power to well over £5000 sterling today. However, according to what had come to be a regular practice, the episcopal revenues were burdened by pensions to royal nominees : in this instance, Lord John Stewart, commendator of Coldingham, had a pension of £400 which had been assigned to him during Robert Reid's tenure of the see, and another pension of £400 was settled on Bellenden, the Justice-Clerk, and his children ; on the occasion of Adam Bothwell's own provision, additional pensions of £200 and 160 merks had been reserved to Archibald Ruthven and Adam Murray respectively, and the former at least was actually paid.⁵ Thus at least £1000, and perhaps more, was going to pensioners, leaving a mere pittance for the bishop.

¹ *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, iii, 3102.

² There was one rather doubtful exception, the parsonage of Holy Cross in Sanday.

³ *Thirds of Benefices* (Scot. Hist. Soc.), 1-2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1, 42-4, 80, 81, 82, 144.

⁵ Dowden, *Bishops*, 265, 267 ; *Thirds of Benefices* 83-4, 115, 147 ; *Acts and Decrees*, xli, 347.

Early in February 1560, less than four months after the process of Adam's appointment to the bishopric was completed, he set out for his diocese from one of the Firth of Forth ports. An English fleet had recently been sent north by Queen Elizabeth to assist the Scottish reformers by preventing the reinforcement of Leith (where the French troops of Mary of Guise, the Regent, were concentrated) and by cutting communications between Leith and Fife (where French troops had been operating against the reformers). On 11th February the bishop was captured by one of the English ships near the Isle of May, and was taken to St. Andrews, where he seems to have been detained for about six weeks.¹ During the period of his detention, the lords of the Scottish council alluded appropriately to the "grete trublis now being in this realme," the "far distance fra thir partis to Orkney" and the "impediment of passing and repassing to and fra the samin."² It must have been the month of April before Bothwell reached Orkney, and there he remained for almost exactly a year, until April 1561.³

Thus during the critical months of 1560, when an English army arrived to batter at the French stronghold at Leith (April-May), the death of Mary of Guise (June) opened the way to arrangements for the withdrawal of French troops from Scotland (July), and a parliament met in Edinburgh which abolished the papal authority in Scotland (August), the bishop was in his diocese. He spent a good deal of time in the bishops' palace at Kirkwall, but it seems very likely that he used the months of July and August to make a preliminary visitation of the parishes and that he did more travelling later in the year.⁴ Both in settling the finance and

¹ *Two missions of Jacques de la Brosse* (Scot. Hist. Soc.), 74-5; *Cal. S. P. Scot.*, i, 338.

² Acts and Decrees, xx, 166.

³ He left Kirkwall between 20th and 25th April, 1561 (Mark Napier, *Memoirs of John Napier of Merchiston*, 72-4). The letters printed by Mark Napier are now in the National Library of Scotland (MSS. 54.1.6).

⁴ Following is the bishop's itinerary for this period: May 18-24, Kirkwall (Acts and Decrees, xxii, 85); June 30 (*anno consecrationis* 2), Kirkwall (*R.M.S.*, iv, 1668); June 30 (a.c. 1), *apud capitulum* (Reg. Ho. Misc. Charters, 142), Kirkwall (Reg. Ho. Mey Papers, 77; Reg. Ho. Calendar of Charters, 1819, 1998); Sept. 20 (a.c. 1), Kirkwall (*Records of the Earldom of Orkney* [Scot. Hist. Soc.], 263); Sept. 23, Kirkwall (Reg. Ho. Misc. Charters, 47); Oct. 21 (a.c. 1), Kirkwall (Mey Papers, 80); Oct. 22, Kirkwall (*Protocol Book of Gilbert Grote* [Scot. Rec. Soc.], No. 229); Oct. 26, "The Yards" (Mark Napier, *op. cit.*, 63-4); Dec. 1, "The Yards" (*ibid.*, 64-5); Dec. 5, "The Yards" (*ibid.*, 66-7); Jan. 19, "The Yards" (*ibid.*, 65-6); Jan. 28 (a.c. 2), "The Yards" (Craven, *op. cit.*, ii, 10); Feb. 5, Kirkwall (Mark Napier, *op. cit.*, 68-70); Feb. 16, Kirkwall (Register of Deeds, iv, 230); March 25, "Mons Bellus" [*i.e.*, Birsay] (Napier, *op. cit.*, 70-71); April 12 (a.c. 2), Kirkwall (*R.M.S.*, v, 2265; *Records of the Earldom of Orkney*, 342-3).

administration of the see and in introducing the reformation to the diocese, he was confronted by very grave difficulties. There was, for one thing, his own poor health : he remarked in October that he had been " in continuall travell and labour of bodye and mynd and evill helth thairthrow continuall sene my cuming in this cuntray," and one of his associates added that " his lordschip was mervallis seik and beleefit nocht to haif recuperit."¹ There were various " cummers " or troubles—something of a favourite word with the bishop—stirred up by those whom he calls his " friends," a term which he may use sarcastically but possibly in the Scots sense of kinsmen. The pensions on the bishopric could be paid only by the sale of some of the revenues which the bishop received in kind, and as prices were very low he feared that it would be impossible to satisfy the pensioners, especially his rapacious cousin the Justice-Clerk, to whom he sent a message imploring him to be reasonable and to remember " that he that wald haif all, all is able to tyne."² Gilbert Balfour, Adam's brother-in-law, had been made the bishop's constable, but was likewise demanding a share of the spoils and was " continuall at debait " with the bishop because the latter " wald not geiff hym all that he haid."³ Besides these financial demands, there was violence and disorder, brought about, so the bishop alleged, by the Justice-Clerk, who had instigated two Sinclair brothers, Henry and Robert, to " loup in ane off my plaices callet Birsay, quhilk thai kepit " (that is, to seize and withhold from the bishop one of his residences); and subsequently the same " conjuratioun," led by Henry Sinclair, beset the bishop on his way back to Kirkwall from one of his visitations: " thair uttir purpos was to haiff alder slaine me, or taiken me."⁴

Whatever personal elements may have been involved in all those " cummers," part of the trouble undoubtedly arose from the bishop's determination to proceed with a policy of reformation. The father of those troublesome Sinclair brothers, who had been involved in a " conjuration " against the bishop, was heard to say that " he wald on na sort consent (that) the mess wer donne," and when the bishop took the honourable, but impolitic, course of asking for public approval of his policy, he met with a rebuff : when " ane gret multitude of the commonis " were gathered " at the first heid court eftyr Yeuil (Yule)," he sent a message asking " giff thai wald be content off mutatioun off religion," and " thai refusset." Thereupon, the bishop proceeds in his account, " I cloisset my

¹ Mark Napier, *op.cit.*, 63, 73.

² Napier, *op. cit.*, 63-4.

³ *Ibid.*, 65, 74.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 68. Later trouble between the Sinclairs and supporters of the bishop seems to be reflected in Pitcairn, *Criminal Trials*, i, 413.

kirk dorris, and hes thoilet na mess to be said thairin sensynne ; quhowbeit thai wer sua irritat thairbe, that eftyr thai haid requyret me sindrie tymes to let thaim in to that effek (i.e., to have mass) at last gaderet together in gret multitud, brocht ane preist to ane chapell hard at the scheik of the schamber quhair I wes lyand seik, and thair causset do mess, and marye certaine pairis in the auld maner. This was donne on Sunday last (2nd February, 1561), quhilk I culd not stoppe without I wald haiff committit slauchter."¹ However, this can have been only a temporary setback, for it was reported in Edinburgh a month later that "the bishop of Orkney beginneth to reform his diocese, and preacheth himself."²

On 20th April, 1561, Adam Bothwell was on board ship in Kirkwall roads, and by 25th April he had evidently left Orkney.³ He was off to France to see the queen : partly, no doubt, to lay before her in person his complaints against the justice-clerk, but partly because, like all Scots, he was intensely concerned to know what her policy would be towards the situation in Scotland and what effect her impending return would have on the country and the church. He does not seem to have reached Paris (in company with the earls of Bothwell and Eglinton and other "noblemen and clerks") until 5th July,⁴ and cannot have spent long there ; apparently he returned to Scotland when Mary herself returned on 19th August, for news of her arrival and his had reached Kirkwall by 28th August.⁵

In spite of the machinations of the Justice-Clerk and others, the opposition to the reformation, and his serious illness, the bishop had succeeded, during his residence in his diocese in 1560-61, in laying the foundations of the organisation of a reformed church. The purely technical difficulties had been considerable, for if he had had to rely on the existing parish benefices, the vicarages and vicarages pensionary, it would have been quite beyond his power to provide emoluments for an adequate reformed ministry. The way was open, however, for a minor revolution in the ecclesiastical structure. The utility of cathedral dignitaries was now open to question, while the emphasis of the reformation was on the parish ministry, and the bishop therefore hit on the plan of making the dignitaries serve as ministers in the parishes from which their revenues derived. In adopting this policy, Bothwell was as typical of the reformed church as Reid had been of the unreformed, and in a sense he reversed Reid's work of diverting revenues from parochial purposes.

¹ Napier, *op. cit.*, 68-9.

² *Calendar of State Papers, Scotland*, i, No. 967.

³ Napier, *op. cit.*, 72-6.

⁴ John Lesley, *History* (ed. Thomson), 284.

⁵ Napier, *op. cit.*, 76-7.

Of the clergy whom Bishop Bothwell found in office, one of the most reliable was James Annand, who had been prebendary of St. John and who, if not already chancellor of the diocese, was at once appointed to that office by Bothwell. The chancellorship was endowed with parsonages and vicarages in Sanday and North Ronaldsay, and Annand also acquired the parsonage of Holy Cross in Westray; under Bishop Bothwell's scheme, Annand therefore began in 1561 a ministry in the islands of Sanday, North Ronaldsay and Westray, which was to last until about 1584.¹ Alexander Dick, who had been provost of Orkney since 1554, drew his revenues from parsonages and vicarages in South Ronaldsay and Burray, and he became minister in those islands.² The chantor, subdean and subchantor possibly served parishes in the same way. These are illustrations of the bishop's way of using the existing dignitaries. Among the parish clergy, too, there were those who at once threw in their lot with the reformed cause and started to act as ministers or readers in 1561: the best known is James Maxwell, who had for twenty years or more been vicar of Stronsay and who was to give another thirty years or so of service in the reformed church,³ but at least seven other vicars of Orkney parishes followed his example.⁴ In Shetland, the bishop was fortunate in having from the outset a firm supporter, Jerome Cheyne, in the key position of archdeacon, which he had held since 1554.⁵ Whether Bishop Bothwell visited Shetland in 1560 or 1561 must remain uncertain, but he did at that time take the first step towards reforming the church in that part of his diocese by appointing Archdeacon Cheyne to serve as "minister in these parts."⁶ Two Shetland vicars were acting in the reformed church by 1562,⁷ but it is not clear whether they had begun so to act in 1561. Bothwell appointed John Gifford, formerly a vicar choral in Kirkwall cathedral, to the Shetland parish of Northmavine, where he served as a reader. These instances represent what the bishop could achieve by using the services of men already in office.

¹ Acts and Decrees, lv, 226 (where he is said to have been provided to his benefices by Bishop Reid); *Protocol Book of Gilbert Grote*, No. 164; Craven, *op. cit.*, 10; *Records of the Earldom of Orkney*, 269, 342; *Thirds of Benefices*, 93, 151, 204-5; *Register of Ministers etc.* 1567.

² *Records of the Earldom of Orkney*, 341; *Thirds of Benefices*, 205; *Register of Assignations and Modifications of Stipends*, 1574 and 1576. It is not demonstrable that Dick had been a minister as early as 1561, but the presumption is strong.

³ *Thirds of Benefices*, 124.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁵ *Reg. Sec. Sig.*, iv, 2785.

⁶ *Thirds of Benefices*, 93.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 151.

To supplement the existing staff of the diocese, and to fill benefices as they fell vacant, Bothwell had brought in his train men who were in sympathy with his policy and who came to share with the survivors of the older regime the task of carrying through the reformation in the islands. The outstanding name among them is that of Gilbert Foulis, a priest from Aberdeenshire who came north as secretary to the bishop and was promoted first to the prebend of St. John and, very shortly afterwards, to the archdeaconry of Orkney. He thus became the bishop's lieutenant for Orkney, but he also acted as minister of Birsay and Harray, the parishes from which the archdeacon's revenues came.¹ Also with the bishop there arrived his kinsman Francis Bothwell, a former friar, who was appointed first to the prebend of St. Augustine, and, not long after, to the treasurership of the diocese. The treasurership was founded on benefices in Stronsay, Eday and Fara, and in those islands we find Francis acting as minister.² William Lauder, a master of arts who likewise came north with Bishop Bothwell, appears to have succeeded Foulis as the bishop's secretary, and in due course he received preferment as vicar of Yell and Fetlar in Shetland.³

Such details illustrate some of the bishop's problems and how he faced them. More general information about his position and status comes from the Accounts of the Collectors of Thirds. Those thirds were to be uplifted from all benefices, from 1561 onwards, partly to augment the revenues of the crown and partly to pay stipends to the clergy of the reformed church ; but by a commonsense arrangement, to avoid the complication of taking money away as third and then returning it as stipend, men who agreed to serve in the reformed church were usually allowed simply to retain their thirds, and this procedure was followed in respect of the Orkney dignitaries and vicars who entered the reformed ministry. There seems at first to have been some doubt as to whether the same procedure should apply in the case of the bishop. At any rate, in 1561 Bothwell simply did not pay his third, no doubt because he argued that he was entitled to retain it although no formal permission had been given to him to do so. But in the account for 1562 we find that the bishop received official recognition both for that year and, retrospectively, for 1561 : for each year, the sum of £300 was allowed to him "for his visitatioun, owirsicht and lawbouris tane upon the kirkis of Orknay and Zetland in place of a superintendent."⁴ In that

¹ Mey Papers, 77, 80 ; Craven, *op. cit.*, ii, 10 ; *Thirds of Benefices*, 93, 124, 151, 204 ; *Reg. Sec. Sig.*, v, 3308.

² Mey Papers, 80 ; *Records of the Earldom of Orkney*, 288, 342 ; *Thirds of Benefices*, 144, 205.

³ Mey Papers, 80 ; *Records of the Earldom of Orkney*, 263 ; *Thirds of Benefices*, 149, 204 ; *Reg. Sec. Sig.*, v, 3174 ; Register of Presentations, ii, 130.

⁴ *Thirds of Benefices*, 152.

period the administration of the reformed church throughout the country lay with superintendents or other clerics performing the functions of superintendents—either ministers appointed as “commissioners” or bishops who had accepted the reformation. The superintendents, although they had not initially been appointed or commissioned by the General Assembly,¹ were supposed to be subject to the Assembly, but it is not quite so clear what the position of the bishops was, for the early records of the Assemblies are extremely defective and it is impossible to say at what point the assembly first defined its attitude to a bishop like Adam Bothwell. The first *recorded* act does not come until June 1563, when Bothwell, along with the bishops of Galloway and Caithness, was commissioned in effect to act as a superintendent in his diocese.² But this, it will be observed, was by no means the beginning of his labours for the reformed church. Bishop Bothwell was present at this meeting of the Assembly in June 1563, and also at its meetings in December 1563, December 1564, June 1565, June 1566 and December 1566. He must have been valued as a wise counsellor, for he was appointed to serve on a commission set up to revise the Book of Discipline, as well as on other committees.³

In the years after his initial visit to Orkney in 1560-1 the bishop was in his diocese much more often than has usually been believed. Charters issued by him make it probable that he was in Orkney in June 1562, July 1563, October 1564 and August 1566.⁴ Possibly those charters are not in themselves conclusive evidence of the bishop's presence in the north on the dates on which they purport to have been granted, but an examination of Bothwell's itinerary makes it seem likely that he visited his diocese in the summer or autumn nearly every year, and confirms the charter evidence.⁵ It is to be noted, too, that Bothwell was subsequently criticised for visiting

¹ Warrender MSS. (Reg. Ho.), vol. A, fos. 93, 98 show that the superintendents were commissioned by the Lords of Council.

² *B. U.K.*, i, 32.

³ *Ibid.*, 35, 38-45, 52 *et seq.*, 60, 77, 90.

⁴ Mey Papers, 93 (Dunbeath in Caithness, 26th June, 1562 [a.c. 6 (*sic*)]); Reg. Ho. Misc. Charters, 114 (Kirkwall, 12th July, 1563); *Ibid.*, fo. 20 (*apud capitulum*, 16th Oct., 1564 [a.c. 6]); Mey Papers, 165 (Kirkwall, 18th Oct., 1564); *Records of the Earldom of Orkney*, 285 (Kirkwall, 26th Aug., 1566).

⁵ After leaving Orkney in April 1561 he went to France, returning in August to Edinburgh, where he is found in September, February and June following (Reg. of Deeds, iv, 342, v, 159; Acts and Decrees, xxxi, 64). He was in Edinburgh on 30th April and 28th June, 1563 (Register of Presentations, ii, 35, 130) and again in December 1563 (*B. U.K.*, i, 38-45), January and March 1564 (Books of Sederunt, ii, 86; Reg. Ho. Charters, 1935; Craven, *op. cit.*, ii, 28; Mey Papers, 104). From that point his periods of residence in Edinburgh can be followed more fully from the Records of the Court of Session, of which he was now a judge. It appears, for example, that he was absent from Edinburgh from July to November 1564.

his kirks as a commissioner of the assembly (that is, after 1563) only from Lammas to Hallowmass¹ (that is, from August to October), and that statement agrees with the dates when he appears to have been in Kirkwall in 1564 and 1566. The bishop claimed later that as a commissioner he had visited all the kirks in his diocese twice, to the hazard of his life in dangerous storms on the seas,² and from this it has been carelessly inferred that he visited his diocese only twice; but that does not necessarily follow, for it is unlikely that he would attempt to visit every kirk each time he was in Orkney, and in any event he had made at least one visitation (in 1560-61) before he had been commissioned by the Assembly.

He was, of course, very largely an absentee. From January 1564 he was, like his father and his uncle before him, a Lord of Session, and had to spend much of his time in Edinburgh. But even as an absentee from his diocese the bishop could still further the cause of the reformed church by appointing ministers to benefices,³ and there is evidence, moreover, that in Edinburgh he was sometimes visited by leading Orcadian clergy like Foulis,⁴ with whom he no doubt discussed policy and to whom he could delegate certain functions in the diocese.⁵

By a combination of personal visitation and direction from Edinburgh, Bothwell brought about a remarkable expansion of the reformed ministry in his diocese. By 1567 there were at least seven, and perhaps nine, ministers in Orkney, and thirteen readers, while in Shetland there were two ministers and nine readers—a total for the diocese of over thirty, giving an officiant of some kind in almost every parish. The law and practice of the church being what they were, all those ministers and readers must have been examined and admitted by the bishop, either in person or by deputy, for there was no one else with authority to perform those functions in that period. That the achievement was creditable to Bishop Bothwell would undoubtedly emerge if a comparison were made between the position in Orkney in 1567 and that in other parts of Scotland, for it may be doubted if any other area was much better staffed. Comparison may be made also with the development within Orkney after 1567: in 1574 and 1576 the number of ministers and readers was practically the same as it had been in 1567, from which it may be deduced that, although criticisms were made of the bishop's work, his withdrawal from the

¹ *B. U. K.*, i, 112.

² *Ibid.*, i, 165.

³ *E.g.*, Register of Presentations, i, 21, ii, 35, 130; Goudie, *Antiquities of Shetland*, 147.

⁴ Reg. of Deeds, iv, 342, v, 159; Acts and Decrees, xxxi, 63.

⁵ For an example of Foulis acting on the bishop's behalf, see Craven, *op. cit.*, 29

administration of the diocese in 1568 was not followed by any spectacular improvement.

All the indications are that the reformation carried through in Orkney by Bishop Bothwell was moderate in character and avoided needless dislocation. Continuity in personnel is most impressive, for it may be questioned whether there was any other diocese in Scotland where so few clergy did not accept the reformation. Out of 34 Orkney clergy who are certainly known, or who may be strongly presumed, to have been in office in 1560, 14 continued to serve in the parishes attached to their benefices, and four or five others may have done so ; four more served in the reformed church in other spheres of duty ; only seven appear not to have served ; and there are four about whom no evidence has come to light. The mild nature of the Orcadian reformation can be illustrated also by the absence of material destruction. The deliberate damage done to church buildings throughout Scotland generally has indeed often been grossly exaggerated, but in Orkney there is no evidence of any damage at all, and the cathedral of St. Magnus is conspicuous proof not only that there was no deliberate destruction but that there was not even the grave neglect which led to the decay of cathedrals elsewhere. It may be, further, that the changes in public worship were less radical in Orkney than elsewhere. Of the bishop's own views on this subject we have only one scrap of evidence—the fact that he disagreed with those who opposed the anointing of King James at his coronation in 1567.¹ It may be of some significance, too, that the bishop's kinsman, Francis, the treasurer, was at one point denounced by the General Assembly as a papist²—a term which may mean only that Francis was less austere than most Scottish reformers in rejecting old observances and ritual. It may very well be that in Bishop Bothwell's diocese the Prayer Book remained in use after it had been displaced generally by the Book of Common Order and that the Christian Year continued to be more regularly observed than it was in other parts of Scotland. Reviewing the whole situation, we have in Orkney a reformation carried through by a bishop who had been appointed before the reformation, with the assistance very largely of clergy already in office ; carried through, too, without violence and apparently by men of moderate views. The proceeding was not in conformity with the Scottish reformation as it is usually understood, and in some ways more resembles the English reformation ; but the parallel of the Lutheran reformation in Denmark and Norway may suggest that the racial characteristics of the people of

¹ See page 98 below.

² *B. U. K.*, i, 112.

Orkney and Shetland made that type of reformation peculiarly acceptable to them. Orkney shared with other northern lands the further feature that the reformation there was complete, and that no indigenous Roman Catholicism survived in the islands.

But if the advance of the reformation in Orkney seems thus to have encountered no grave obstacles after 1561, there were plenty of "cummers," as the bishop called them, arising from other causes. The management of the varied revenues of the see was perpetually a problem. There was all along the troublesome business of turning the bishop's corn, fish, butter and so forth into the hard cash which was alone acceptable to most of his creditors.¹ It was quite indispensable to have a chamberlain to manage the revenues, but Bothwell had difficulties with chamberlains who were either too inefficient or too dishonest to render satisfactory accounts of their intromissions; after prolonged litigation against one of his chamberlains,² the bishop was forced to go the length of throwing another into prison.³ All along the Justice-Clerk continued to exact his pound of flesh in the matter of his pension, and had it increased by £200 when one of the other pensioners died in 1564.⁴ Besides the Justice-Clerk, his brother, Patrick Bellenden of Stennes, who was sheriff of Orkney, and the bishop's brother-in-law, Gilbert Balfour of Westray, made manifold and pressing demands for shares in the property of the bishopric,⁵ and there was evidently a great deal of friction between the bishop and his so-called "friends."

However, these financial complications were succeeded, in 1567, by a new series of "cummers," arising from the bishop's part in the marriage of Queen Mary to James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell. For this the bishop has been much blamed, but his action is not indefensible. Ever since Queen Mary's return from France in 1561, the reformed church had been in an ambiguous and insecure position, and in 1565 and 1566, when the queen's policy seemed to be directed towards a papalist reaction, it received even less favourable treatment than before. Towards the end of 1566 there came a sudden change in the royal policy, and generous financial provision was made for the ministers.⁶ On top of this came the

¹ *E.g.*, Acts and Decrees, xxv, 217; xxxi, 63; xxxv, 20.

² Acts and Decrees, xxxi, 67, 206, 384.

³ Acts and Decrees, xliii, 341; *Protocol Book of Gilbert Grote*, No. 318; *cf.* Craven, *op. cit.*, 25-6. When the bishop died in 1593, 10,000 merks were still owing to him by the heir of a former chamberlain (Edinburgh Testaments, 24th Dec. 1608).

⁴ Acts and Decrees, xxxi, 64.

⁵ *R.M.S.*, iv, 1710; Craven, *op. cit.*, 25; Acts and Decrees, xxxi, 88.

⁶ *Thirde of Benefices*, xxvii-xxviii; *Reg. Privy Co.*, i, 487-8; *Reg. Sec. Sig.*, v, p. xiv.

murder of Darnley and Mary's marriage to Bothwell. Now, the Earl of Bothwell had many faults, but he was an unwavering protestant; the queen followed up her financial generosity to the ministers by an act taking the reformed church under her protection;¹ and she consented to be married according to the reformed rite.² There seemed a distinct prospect of new and better times for the reformed cause, and Adam Bothwell may well have conceived it to be his duty to become one of the instruments to bring about such a happy conclusion. Unlike those who condemned him after the event, he did not know what the sequel would be—how within a matter of weeks Mary would be deposed in favour of her infant son and the Earl of Bothwell would be a fugitive from the wrath of the Scots lords.

That revolution did, however, open up prospects at least as pleasing to the reformers as any developments which might have ensued from the Bothwell marriage, and the bishop's next actions are explicable on the simple assumption that he was seeking every opportunity to contribute to the wellbeing of the reformed church. He was one of the commissioners who received Mary's demission of the crown,³ and he took part in the new king's coronation: John Knox preached the sermon, the bishop, with two superintendents, crowned and invested the king, and the bishop himself performed the anointing⁴—a rite at which a more extreme reformer might have scrupled.

The earl of Bothwell had meanwhile made for Orkney, of which the queen had made him duke. Repulsed from Kirkwall and Noltland castles by Gilbert Balfour, he moved on to Shetland. In August, only a matter of days after the coronation, an expedition left Dundee in pursuit of the fugitive. It was commanded by Kirkcaldy of Grange, and he took with him his cousin the bishop, who was acquainted with the islands and could use his authority to obtain local assistance there, besides having a knowledge of law which might prove useful. This adventure led to the most picturesque incident in Adam Bothwell's career. When the chase reached the north mouth of Bressay Sound, Earl Bothwell's ship enticed Kirkcaldy's ship, the Unicorn, on to a rock where she struck and had to be abandoned; as a boat was drawing away from the wreck, the bishop, left

¹ *A.P.S.*, ii, 548 c. 2.

² Sir James Melville's *Memoirs* are explicit on this point (Bannatyne Club edn., 178-9), and no doubt can arise in the mind of anyone who knows the drift of Mary's whole policy at this stage or who is familiar with the career of Bishop Adam Bothwell. Cf. Napier, *op. cit.*, 117n, and Hay Fleming, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 455.

³ Keith, *History*, ii, 710, 722-3.

⁴ Laing, *Knox's Works*, vi, 556; *Reg. Privy Council*, i, 542.

on board, saved his life by a remarkable "loup" into the already crowded craft.¹

Adam Bothwell had given proof of his readiness to risk even his life in the cause of King James and the reformed church, but it is clear that a serious breach had opened between him and the General Assembly. The reason is by no means apparent. It is true that the standard of efficiency which the reformed church demanded of its administrators was a high one—so high, indeed, that few attained it, and almost every superintendent and bishop was under censure at one time or another. But it was a time when the king's party was singularly unsure of itself and when many of its supporters were not to be relied on, so the root cause of the bishop's troubles may have been nothing more than a general atmosphere of suspicion; equally, there may have been personal or family feuds at work which are concealed from us, and we may especially suspect the influence of Lord Robert Stewart, Commendator of Holyrood and feuar of Orkney, who wanted, by fair means or foul, to oust the bishop from Orkney and establish complete control there. At any rate, at the assembly of December 1567 a series of accusations against Bishop Bothwell was produced: his visitation had not been sufficiently conscientious; his interests were diverted by his place as a judge in the Court of Session; he had in his company Francis Bothwell, "a papist"; and he had solemnised the marriage of the queen to the earl of Bothwell, contrary to an act against marrying a divorced adulterer. The bishop was deprived "from all function in the ministry." Yet on every charge except the last where the Assembly was no doubt technically in the right, the bishop had a good defence: his health, he said, made it impossible to "remain in Orkney all the year, by reason of the evil air and the weakness of his body"; he denied that Francis Bothwell was a papist; and he reminded the Assembly that it had approved of his acceptance of office as a Lord of Session.² When the Assembly met again, in July 1568, the bishop was restored to his functions, on condition that he made a public profession of his fault in celebrating the queen's marriage³—a condition which may suggest that his defence was considered satisfactory on the other charges. Bishop Bothwell continued to demonstrate his zeal for the king's government by taking part in the negotiations at York which the Scots hoped in vain would lead to a condemnation of Queen Mary and the recognition of King James by Queen Elizabeth.

But in spite of his rehabilitation, the bishop was finished with Orkney,

¹ There is a spirited account of the episode in Mark Napier, *op. cit.*, 122.

² *B. U. K.*, i, 112, 114.

³ *B. U. K.*, i, 131.

for in 1568 he entered into a contract with Lord Robert Stewart which virtually brought to an end his connection with the diocese. One reason for his acceptance of such a bargain may have been his ill-health, of which he still complained (although he survived for another twenty-five years in the less arduous life of a Lord of Session resident in Edinburgh). But undoubtedly the principal cause of the bishop's abdication of his see was the determined enmity of the utterly unscrupulous Lord Robert. Bothwell complained that Lord Robert had "violently intruded himself in his whole living, with bloodshed and hurt of his servants,"¹ and this is borne out by record evidence which discloses that some of Lord Robert's followers seized Kirkwall Cathedral by force and murdered some of the bishop's servants.² Under compulsion, therefore, the bishop entered into a contract whereby the entire revenues of the bishopric, with the exception of £500 annually payable to the bishop, were in effect made over to Lord Robert, along with the bishop's extensive temporal jurisdiction and his rights of patronage.³ In exchange, Bothwell received the abbey of Holyroodhouse, less a pension of £1000 annually to Lord Robert.⁴ Although the abbey, even with the deduction of £1000, was a far wealthier benefice than the bishopric, there can be no doubt that Lord Robert had the better part of the bargain, especially as Bothwell had often to resort to legal action against Robert for failure to carry out his obligations under the contract.⁵ Lord Robert, on his side, was clearly going to exploit for his own financial advantage the plenary powers he now enjoyed in Orkney, as holder of both the earldom and the bishopric property.

Adam Bothwell had not, of course, transferred to Lord Robert his spiritual functions as bishop, but, although he retained his title of bishop of Orkney until his death in 1593, his diocesan duties were from this point committed by the General Assembly to "commissioners" or "superintendents," and he took no further part in church affairs in Orkney. His work there had been completed in 1567.

¹ *B. U. K.*, i, 165.

² *R.S.S.*, vi, 306, 423, 505.

³ *Acts and Decrees*, xlii, 340.

⁴ *R.S.S.*, vi, 506.

⁵ *E.g.*, *R.S.S.*, lxii, 79, lxiii, 89.